

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Ky Chung, UN Photo

IMPACT 2014

- Provided intensive training and international advocacy support to women human rights defenders from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Iraq, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sudan, among others
- Collaborated closely with the African Commission Special Rapporteur to produce a report on the role, situation and protection needs of women human rights defenders in Africa
- Undertook both systemic and specific advocacy to demand accountability for discrimination and attacks against women human rights defenders in Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt and Mexico
- Resourced and supported the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC), a global network of 28 member organisations that supports and protects women human rights defenders worldwide
- Secured recommendations from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for China to adopt specific laws and policies to protect women defenders



African Commission Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Reine Alapini-Gansou worked closely with ISHR in the development of her important report on women human rights defenders in Africa.

Around the world women human rights defenders face threats and risks for their work to challenge discrimination, patriarchy and entrenched male privilege. ISHR stands with them in this work, providing training and advocacy support, lobbying to ensure the role and protection needs of women defenders are reflected in international resolutions and standards, and working with women's rights activists and groups to promote the domestic implementation of these resolutions and standards.

In 2014, ISHR was privileged to provide intensive training to women human rights defenders from all regions who work across a range of issues, including sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, land and environmental rights, access to justice and detention conditions. We also supported and accompanied them in their advocacy on Human Rights Council resolutions on eliminating violence against women and promoting the political participation of women.

In the same period, ISHR supported the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Reine Alapini-Gansou, to produce a major report on the situation and protection needs of women human rights defenders in Africa. Together with a landmark UN General Assembly resolution on women human rights defenders in December 2013, this report provides a roadmap on the legislative, policy, institutional and structural reforms necessary to ensure women defenders can work free from insecurity, violence and discrimination. The implementation of the General Assembly resolution and the African Commission report will be key priorities for ISHR and other partners within the WHRDIC in 2015.

In addition to promoting progress, much of ISHR's work in this area involves guarding and advocating against threats to the enjoyment of universal rights posed by selective appeals to culture, religion and 'traditional values'. In this regard, we deeply regret the passage of a regressive resolution on the 'protection of the family' at the Human Rights Council in 2014 and are pledged to reversing it and countering other similar threats in the years ahead.

“A big thank you to the ISHR team for putting together a wonderful workshop with an amazing set of human rights defenders from all over the world.”



Aliya Khan

Pakistani women human rights defender and participant in the 2014 Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme

“In over 15 years as a human rights defender in Mexico, I have personally suffered numerous violations of my human rights because of my gender, and numerous female colleagues have found themselves in the same situation. Because women human rights defenders face gender-specific risks, it is essential to make protection measures gender-specific and holistic. This involves not only applying a gender-specific interpretation of traditional security measures, but also addressing the root causes of insecurity for women human rights defenders and guaranteeing the conditions necessary to enable them to carry out their work.”



Alejandra Ancheita

Director of ProDESC, participant in the 2014 ISHR training on business and human rights defenders and recipient of the 2014 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders

“We must recognize the vital role of women who defend human rights, often at great risk to themselves and their families precisely because they are viewed as stepping outside socially prescriptive gender stereotypes. We must recognize the role of all people, women and men, who publicly call for gender equality and often, as a result, find themselves the victim of archaic and patriarchal, but powerful, threats to their reputations, their work and even their lives. These extraordinary individuals – women human rights defenders – operate in hostile environments, where arguments of cultural relativism are common and often against the background of the rise of extremist, misogynistic groups, which threaten to dismantle the gains of the past.”



Jean-Marc Ferré, UN Photo

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

VISION 2015

With your support we will:

- Work with members of the WHRDIC to develop strategies and undertake actions to implement a landmark 2013 international resolution on women human rights defenders at the national level
- Provide intensive training and strategic advice to women human rights defenders to support and strengthen their advocacy at the UN, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Work with local partners, such as JASS Mesoamerica and the Côte d'Ivoire Human Rights Defenders Coalition, to ensure that national laws, policies and protection mechanisms for human rights defenders respond to the particular risks and threats faced by women
- Undertake extensive advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council in relation to key resolutions on promoting the political participation of women and ending violence and discrimination against women



Women human rights defenders from 17 countries gained invaluable knowledge and experience at an advanced training and advocacy programme with ISHR in June 2014.